

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WILLIAM J. PERRY
REMARKS QUOTED ON CBS-TV PROGRAM, "CBS EVENING NEWS"
GOMA, ZAIRE
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RUSS MITCHELL: This is also an historic day in efforts to stop the seemingly endless wave of death and destruction plaguing refugees from Rwanda. Saying the corner has now been turned, a top U.S. official was on hand as the first major American relief effort in the region got underway.

Barry Petersen reports.

BARRY PETERSEN: He came to meet and greet and seal a deal, using Kigali airport for the U.S. aid effort. The official presence of the American Secretary of Defense, William Perry, placing an American stamp of approval on Rwanda's victorious rebel government.

The first huge cargo planes are already landing at Kigali. More soldiers are now on guard. And using this airport will double the capacity of the humanitarian lifeline almost instantly.

Then Perry flew on to Zaire, following the same route as the hundreds of thousands of refugees America has vowed to help.

The worldwide relief effort may go on for a year or more. America, he hopes, will be done long before that.

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WILLIAM PERRY: I couldn't give you an intelligent estimate of the time yet. We'll stay here as long as needed to do the mission that we're sent here to do.

PETERSEN: His outside news conference watched by the people he pledged his soldiers would help but not fight for.

SECRETARY PERRY: The role of the American forces here are humanitarian.

PETERSEN: For the first Americans on the scene, it's been a frustrating time: lack of equipment, lack of personnel. But now, ever so slowly, that's beginning to change.

The Defense Secretary heard about some of that frustration at the water purification unit set up by the Army to supply distant camps. Water is plentiful but U.N. tanker trucks are not.

OFFICER: The distribution, however, has not been able to keep up with our production.

PETERSEN: Here he was both tourist and cheerleader.

SECRETARY PERRY: You're doing the work of the Lord. Believe me. It's saving thousands of lives just by what one team of people is doing here.

PETERSEN: This was also the Lord's work. At Goma cemetery, a single blessing over a mass grave. No matter how quickly the world reacts, there is much more of this kind of work still ahead.

Barry Petersen, CBS News, Goma, Zaire.